

As Prepared for Delivery

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U.S. Trade Representative
U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum
Washington, DC
October 29, 2001

Honorable Ministers

Excellencies

Members of Congress

Distinguished Guests:

I am pleased to join my colleagues Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill, Secretary of Commerce Don Evans, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice in hosting this inaugural U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum.

We thank you for honoring our invitation.

First, I want to thank all of you for the messages of support you have sent to the United States, and to me personally, after September 11.

You know that many Africans, and about 500 Muslims, were among the innocent citizens of 80

countries who were killed by terrorists that day.

That's one reason why I firmly believed this conference needed to go forward.

AGOA is a gift, an opportunity, we must seize, to open U.S. markets for Africa, open African markets for Americans, and open our societies and peoples to one another – through a positive agenda of economic empowerment, opportunity, and hope.

This Forum is the brainchild of the framers of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) -- Congressmen Bill Archer, Charlie Rangel, Phil Crane, Jim McDermott, Ed Royce, Donald Payne and Bill Jefferson. They understood the importance of an annual dialogue on trade and economic issues between the United States and the countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

President Bush established this Forum (on May 16) to institutionalize this dialogue and further develop a framework and foundation in support of our shared vision of economic growth through expanded trade and investment.

This Forum sends a message to the world that the U.S. commitment to prosperity and freedom in sub-Saharan Africa is solid, our conviction is strong, and our partnership is vibrant.

President Bush will join us this morning to speak about the importance of sub-Saharan Africa to the

United States. In addition to my colleagues in the Administration who are co-hosting this Forum, we will also be joined by the Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman, Members of the U.S. Congress, the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development Andrew Natsios, and the heads of U.S. government trade finance agencies. We are also joined by U.S. private sector leaders.

Our agenda is broad, covering the overall aims of U.S. policy toward Africa; the African Growth and Opportunity Act; the new Round of global trade negotiations; trade financing and capacity-building; best practices and policies to address poverty; and joint work to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

While recognizing our initial progress, we must also develop an integrated strategy to address a range of challenges. We also need a record of concrete achievements, upon which we can build.

Our work in the Forum centers on trade and investment because they are pathways from poverty and despair to economic empowerment, opportunity, and freedom.

The foundation that we will lay today, and build upon in the months and years ahead, requires the best ideas and thinking from Africa and the United States. Our sustained dialogue must be supported by strong ideas and innovative solutions. The sessions today will, therefore, be co-chaired by U.S. and African officials.

We recognize that America's Africa policy can best be pursued in cooperation with your countries,

with our initiatives and efforts fostering, supporting, and complementing yours.

We need to listen and learn from Africans as well as support them.

I believe this Forum and our collective work will turn out to be an historic step on the road to a stronger U.S.- Africa economic and political relationship.

We now have an opportunity to move from colonial legacies, dependency, and frustration . . . to empowerment, opportunity, and hope.

Honorable Ministers, distinguished guests, I am pleased to welcome you to Washington and to officially open the first U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum.